

# Daily Journal

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## TOP 100 — 2020

CHAIR OF THE STATE BAR BOARD OF TRUSTEES

## Alan K. Steinbrecher

**S**teinbrecher's last day in charge of the State Bar is September 24, when he'll return to the job he put on hold for a year as the founding member of Steinbrecher & Span, a business, transactional and regulatory firm.

"I'm hanging in there," he said in late August, as he oversaw the finishing touches on novel plans to administer the bar exam remotely to more than 12,000 applicants across the U.S. "It has been one exciting development after another around here."

Steinbrecher's official title is chair of the State Bar Board of Trustees, appointed by the state Supreme Court to run an attorney licensing agency that was split from the state's lawyers' association in 2018 to function as a stand-alone entity. Challenges abounded even before he took office and the coronavirus pandemic further complicated things as officials struggled to field concerns about diversity in the profession, disparities in the rate of discipline between Black and White male attorneys and the gulf separating the public's legal needs and available legal services.

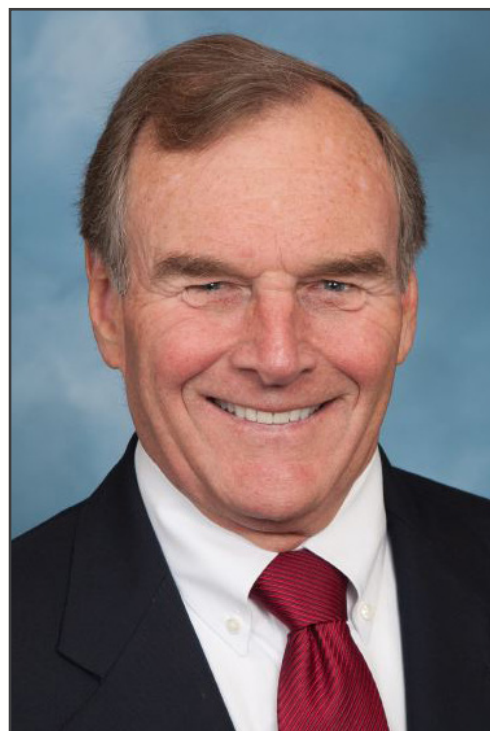
The lawyer in charge is a former U.S. Navy fighter pilot who flew 177 combat missions during the Vietnam War. "Flying the combat missions was tough, but this

may have been co-equal to that," Steinbrecher said. "The week after I was sworn in, my executive director resigned. Then we lurched into Covid."

To deal with the bar exam, he built on the existing use of software to administer the test online in large halls with in-person proctors. "The virus forced the next step, and that's the big unknown right now. How can we maintain the necessary level of integrity and security when we're all remote. It took my crackerjack senior leadership team and 558 State Bar employees to brainstorm and make it all happen. The exam will require test takers to be alone in a room with their laptop cameras on and will use advanced software to detect cheating.

"Then we need tech people to be available for problems. Plus, we have a limited number of graders. And we need people to review the video if we see suspicious activity."

Steinbrecher launched a supervised provisional licensing program that will provide applicants a limited permit to practice specified areas of law under the supervision of a licensed attorney until they are able to take the bar exam. And he addressed inequality issues with studies and scheduled a diversity and inclusion summit for later in 2020.



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As for the justice gap, "It's huge," he said, "and we're not close to closing it." Proposed solutions include a paraprofessional program, software to answer simple legal questions online and fee sharing between lawyers and non-attorneys. "There are a lot of pitfalls," Steinbrecher said. "But it just can't stand that people need legal services and can't get them."

— John Roemer